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ABSTRACT

Research on interpersonal forgiveness has blossomed in counseling and moral education. The impact of receiving interpersonal forgiveness from another--the forswearing of revenge and resentment toward a person who has hurt us--is examined here. Most theory and research in developmental, counseling, and educational psychology suggest that the experience of receiving forgiveness should have positive benefits, while research in the related area of social psychology tempers such optimism. To test the effects of forgiveness, 209 college students from a small, church-affiliated four-year liberal arts college completed instruments that measured forgiveness, self-esteem, social desirability, and religious style. Results indicate that correlations between forgiveness outcomes and demographic variables were weak. The most interesting correlation between forgiveness outcomes and relationship variables involved the perceived quality of forgiveness offered, the nature of the relationship before the offense, and the degree of pain caused, suggesting that offering forgiveness in a manner that is loving and uncoercive is important if one wants to induce positive change in the offender and the relationship. Interpersonal mercy appears to be multi-dimensional; gender differences on the impact of receiving forgiveness are discussed. (KJM)

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Running head: RECEIVING FORGIVENESS

Receiving Forgiveness as an Exercise in Moral Education

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL, March 1997.

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Abstract

The purpose of the project was to assess the impact of receiving forgiveness from another, especially in the area of moral growth. Most theory and research in the areas of developmental, counseling, and educational psychology suggest that the experience of receiving forgiveness should have positive benefits, while research in a related area of social psychology tempers such optimism. Two-hundred and five participants completed measures of the effects of receiving forgiveness, self-esteem, social desirability, and religious style. Results suggest that the experience of interpersonal mercy is multi-dimensional, including one overtly moral dimension and several dimensions that involve morality exercised in context (e.g., in relationships). The offended party's perception of the quality of forgiveness offered may play a large role in how that forgiveness impacts the offender. Finally, gender differences in the impact of receiving forgiveness are noted and discussed.

In the past 10 years, theory and research on interpersonal forgiveness has burgeoned in the areas of counseling (*e.g.*, Hebl & Enright, 1993; Freedman & Enright, 1996) and moral education (*e.g.*, Al-Mabuk, Enright, & Cardis, 1995; Enright, Gassin & Wu, 1992; Gassin, 1995, in press). Rooted in the virtues of mercy, moral love (agape), and/or generosity, interpersonal forgiveness can be defined as the forswearing of revenge and resentment toward a person who has hurt us by striving to view the offender with compassion (North, 1987). This process occurs with full recognition that the offender has indeed committed a wrong and has therefore given up his/her right to compassion from the offended person. (North, 1987; Enright and the Human Development Study Group, 1991). Almost all empirical research to date - has focused on the process and effects of offering forgiveness on the forgiver. Research suggests that offering forgiveness leads to outcomes such as reduced anxiety and depression, higher self-esteem, and lower blood pressure (Al-Mabuk et al., 1995; Hebl & Enright, 1993; Huang, 1990; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Subkoviak et al., 1992). Despite the recent proliferation of work on offering forgiveness, there has been little theoretical analysis or empirical demonstration of the effects of receiving forgiveness on the offender. The purpose of this project is to report data on the effects of receiving forgiveness, especially as they are related to a person's moral development.

Extant writings suggest that the effects of receiving forgiveness are mostly positive. Enright and colleagues (1996) theorized about the process of receiving forgiveness from another. Although involving 20 different steps, the model can be summarized in four general phases:

1) an uncovering phase, where one acknowledges and experiences the hurt one has inflicted on the other and the consequences thereof;
2) a decision phase, where the offender feels a need for change in his/her relationship with the other and decides to accept forgiveness;
3) a work phase, where the offender seeks to understand and empathize with the injured party, a process that may be particularly important if the injured party is not willing to grant forgiveness at the time; and,
4) an outcome phase, where the offender experiences the psychological benefits of genuinely receiving forgiveness from another.

The details of this theoretical model, as well as scattered other writings (e.g., Fennell, 1993; Todd, 1985; Worthington & DiBlasio, 1990) suggest that accepting forgiveness for wrongdoing may lead to a variety of morally-relevant outcomes, including empathy for the injured party, a commitment to live according to ethical principles, deriving new meanings and purposes in life, a release from guilt and remorse, and enriched personal relationships.

In an attempt to empirically assess the outcomes of receiving forgiveness, Gassin (1996, in press) conducted an initial investigation in which 10 participants provided qualitative information about a situation in which they hurt another person and were forgiven. After providing a qualitative description of the situation, participants rated a series of 12 possible outcomes of receiving forgiveness. Qualitative data suggested that a variety of personal (e.g., increased understanding of human nature, spiritual development) and social (e.g., committing to taking more responsibility in relationships, reconciliation) benefits accrue when one is the recipient of forgiveness. Quantitative analysis of participants' ratings also supported the generally positive effects of receiving forgiveness: participants generally disagreed that forgiveness had negative effects (e.g., anger, guilt) and agreed that it had positive effects (e.g., joy, improvement in personal values). In many cases, post-hoc analyses confirmed that the negative effects were rated significantly less likely to occur than the positive effects. Finally, several "clusters" of outcomes emerged from the correlational analysis: one relating to internal experience (involving joy, positive personality change, and a desire not to hurt the person again) and one relating to relationship experience (involving the re-establishment of trust, reconciliation, and relief).

While clinical and developmental psychologists have extolled the benefits of receiving forgiveness, work in social psychology suggests that the effects of receiving forgiveness may not be completely positive. Experimental work in the laboratory and analyses of naturally-occurring helping situations suggest that being the target of another's prosocial act can actually have negative repercussions. In a comprehensive review of research on recipients' reactions to assistance, Fisher, Nadler, and Whitcher-Alagna (1982) highlighted several conditions in which the target of prosocial behavior may react negatively (e.g., by negatively evaluating the helper, demonstrating decreases in self-esteem, etc.). For example, research demonstrates that recipients may respond negatively because of the inequity created by a prosocial act that cannot easily be reciprocated; this is particularly true when the assistance offered is given deliberately, voluntarily, and with good motives (which we would hope forgiveness is). Perceived inequity may also lead an aid recipient to redefine freely-offered assistance as a duty on the part of the helper. If such a phenomenon exists in the

forgiveness process, then the offender may redefine mercy as an obligation, thereby distorting the accepted view of forgiveness. Fisher et al. review other research suggesting that being the target of prosocial behavior can have negative outcomes when the recipient interprets the assistance as implying she is inadequate (forgiveness implies the offender was at least temporarily morally inadequate), when the helper has more physical or social resources than the recipient (the forgiver is often in a position of moral superiority), when the recipient is highly ego-involved in the situation where help has been offered (presumably, most people are highly ego-involved when they have hurt a significant other), and when the target has high self-esteem.

Although receiving help and accepting forgiveness are not the same experience, they do share the similarity of undeservedly benefitting from another's prosocial behavior. To some extent, then, we might consider the extensive work on receiving assistance as relevant for formulating hypotheses about the effects of receiving forgiveness. In fact, considering that accepting forgiveness implies guilt on the part of the offender and that she is benefitting from the prosocial behavior of one who is justified in displaying "antisocial" behavior toward her (e.g., retaliation), we might even propose that receiving forgiveness would be a more unpleasant experience to the target individual than simply receiving help. While the bulk of opinion and initial empirical assessment suggests that receiving forgiveness in the right spirit will have positive psychological and social effects on the offender, some argument can be made to support the claim that being offered forgiveness may not always be a constructive experience.

The purpose of this study is to replicate the initial work of Gassin (1996, in press) with a larger sample, focusing particularly on the moral benefits of receiving forgiveness. In addition, given the work on the negative effects of being the target of prosocial behavior, this study also assesses individual differences in the effects of receiving forgiveness.

Method

Participants

Two-hundred and five students from a small, church-affiliated four-year liberal arts college in a medium-sized Midwestern town completed the instruments described below. Three participants were dropped from the study because they could not think of a time they had hurt someone or reported that the injured party had not forgiven them. The average age of the sample was 20.11. (Descriptive statistics for age and all non-nominal variables are reported in Table 1.) Sixty-seven males and 135 females participated. Other demographic information is reported in Table 2. Because

some readers may be concerned that the large number of Christians in the sample may present a bias, it is important to note that a variety of church affiliations were represented, including both mainline and evangelical Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox.

Instruments

Participants completed four instruments: the Receiving Forgiveness Survey, the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, the Crowne-Marlowe Social Desirability Scale, and the Religious Life Scale.

Receiving Forgiveness Survey. This instrument asked participants to provide information about a time they offended another person and that person ultimately forgave them. Participants provided data about the nature of the offense, rated on a 5-point Likert scale a series of 37 statements about the effect of receiving forgiveness and 11 statements about the nature of the forgiveness offered, and provided general demographic information. Statements concerning the effects of receiving forgiveness included both positive ("I am joyful") and negative ("I see how easy it is to exploit people") items that were designed to assess emotional, cognitive, relational, and moral outcomes. Negative items were reversed-scored before data analysis.[1] Statements concerning the quality of forgiveness offered were phrased in positive and negative terms and assessed the person's perceptions of how the injured party offered forgiveness (e.g., "S/he withheld forgiveness until I apologized" and "S/he is actively involved in my life in a positive way").

Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (CSEI; Coopersmith, 1981). This scale consists of 25 true-false items assessing participants' level of self-esteem in a variety of areas.

Crowne-Marlowe Social Desirability Scale (CMSDS, Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). This 33-item scale assesses a person's propensity to "fake good" on test items.

Religious Life Scale. This instrument assessed participants "style" of faith by requiring them to rate their agreement with 32 items on a 5-point Likert scale. Results involving faith-related variables are not the focus of this paper and will be reported elsewhere (Gassin, in preparation).

Procedure

Most students were recruited for participation by offering a small number of extra-credit points in their psychology classes; approximately 35 participants were members of an introductory psychology class in which research

[1] The exception to this is that negative items were not reverse-scored for the purposes of factor analysis. This makes interpretation of the factor analysis results in Table 3 easier.

participation was required. Participants completed the instruments in large groups during specially-scheduled evening meetings. Each person received a packet consisting of the four instruments in a random order. The individual administering the surveys instructed participants to complete the instruments in the order in which they found them. Participants answered all questions (except those requiring qualitative description about the offense) on computer cards.

Results

Targets of Offense

As noted in Table 2, the most common "targets" of offense were friends and dating partners, accounting for 64.4 percent of all situations. Parents were hurt 19.8 percent of the time, while 12.4 percent of participants reported hurting siblings. Other categories of injured parties were reported much less frequently. Most participants (77.1%) apologized to the injured party before forgiveness was offered.

Instruments

Reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed for each scale. The 37-item scale assessing participants' self-reported impact of receiving forgiveness had an alpha of .85; the reliability of the 11-item quality of forgiveness received scale was .76. CSEI reliability was .78, and the alpha for the CMSDS was .62.

Factor Analysis of Receiving Forgiveness Scale. The 28 items retained after the reliability analysis were subjected to a principal components factor analysis. Two items that had no factor loadings above .40 after varimax rotation were discarded, leaving a total of 26 items for the final scale. Based on the scree plot and substantive evaluation of the factors, a 4-factor solution explaining 49% of the total variance was adopted (Table 3). The first factor consists of nine items, eight of which appear to assess the quality of relationship with the offender. Only item 11, "I am joyful," is not obviously relational in nature. This factor accounted for 24.7% of the total variance and had a reliability of .87. Seven items, mostly reflecting one's view of self as offender, comprise the second factor. These items reflect a variety of emotional and cognitive evaluations of self as offender and of the offense. Factor 2 accounts for 11.5% of total variance and has a reliability of .76.

Factor 3 consists of six items that focus mainly on the participant's view of the injured party. The one apparent exception to this is item 27, "I have decided forgiveness is a bad idea." However, when one considers that this general belief probably affects how the person evaluates a specific individual who has engaged in forgiveness, the fact that this item loads on this factor is easier to understand. Seven percent of total variance is explained by this factor; its reliability

coefficient is .74. Four items, all reflecting positive internal moral change, comprise the final factor, which accounts for 5.8% of the total variance and has a reliability of .78.

A subscale for each factor was created by summing scores on the items comprising each factor. These subscales were summed to create a total forgiveness score. The reliability of the 26-item total forgiveness scale was .86. Correlations between each of the factors and between the factors and the total forgiveness scale are reported in Table 4. In general, the four factors are moderately, positively, and significantly correlated with one another, the main exception being that Factor 2 demonstrates no significant correlation with either Factor 3 or 4.

Correlations

Correlations were calculated between all variables. In the initial analysis, social desirability was correlated at near-significant or significant levels with several variables, including some forgiveness variables and self-esteem. Although the magnitude of these correlations was low (usually $|r| \leq .15$), correlations were re-computed for all variables, partialing out the effects of social desirability. All correlations reported in this manuscript, therefore, are partial correlations, holding social desirability constant. Below three groups of correlations are reviewed: those relating forgiveness variables to demographic, relationship, and internal psychological variables.

Few significant relationships surfaced between the five forgiveness variables (four subscale scores and total score) and demographic variables (Table 5). Age and positive moral change were weakly and negatively correlated, suggesting that younger individuals reported somewhat more positive moral change as a result of being forgiven. Some weak relationships surfaced between gender and forgiveness variables: women were slightly more likely to report higher scores on Factors 1 (relationship improvement) and 3 (view of injured party) and receiving forgiveness total score (all r's = -.12, $p < .10$). Because this trend indicated the possibility of gender differences in the experience of receiving forgiveness, correlations were also computed within each sex. These results are reported below.

Forgiveness scales were also correlated with other variables related to the participant's relationship with the injured party (Table 6). Those who apologized before forgiveness was offered were slightly more likely to experience greater benefits from receiving forgiveness, especially in the areas of relationship improvement and opinion of offended party. Time since offense was positively related to impact of forgiveness on participants' views of themselves as offender, their view of the injured party, and their overall evaluation of the effects of receiving forgiveness. Participants' perceptions of the quality of the forgiveness offered them was positively associated with all forgiveness scales, but most

strongly with relationship improvement, view of the injured party, and overall benefit from receiving forgiveness. Feeling close to the injured party before the occurrence of the offense was negatively correlated with the effects of forgiveness on one's view of self as offender, as was considering the relationship to be important. Importance of relationship was positively related to the effects of forgiveness on relationship improvement, view of injured party, and positive moral change. Level of emotional pain caused was negatively related to the effects of forgiveness on one's view of self as offender, but positively related to the effects of forgiveness on positive moral change. Both causing the injured party practical problems and total pain index (created by summing scores on emotional pain, physical pain, and practical problems caused) were negatively correlated with the effects of forgiveness on view of self as offender. It should be noted that although many of these correlations are significant by traditional standards, their magnitude is often quite low.

In the results reported here, self-esteem was the only internal psychological variable to be correlated with forgiveness subscales. In the overall sample, self-esteem was marginally correlated with the effects of forgiveness on one's view of self and offense and with effects of forgiveness total score (both r's = .13, $p < .10$).

As reported above, there was a slight trend for women to demonstrate more effects of forgiveness than men. This trend (and its slight magnitude) was confirmed in t-tests assessing gender differences in forgiveness variables. Results of these t-tests are reported in Table 7. Women report more positive effects of receiving forgiveness on all scales, but only on the Factor 1 subscale (relationship improvement) and the total score does this difference meet even a liberal criterion of significance ($p < .10$). However, because this is an initial exploration into the effects of receiving forgiveness, correlations were computed separately for males and females to ensure that no interesting differences were overlooked. These correlations are reported in Table 8. Because of the wide discrepancy in sample size (depending on the coefficient, there are as few as 135 females and 67 males), these patterns must be interpreted with some caution. Significance tests for women's correlations were somewhat more sensitive than those for men's. In order to simplify identification of potentially interesting gender-related patterns, only those correlation pairs in which at least one coefficient was of moderate magnitude ($|r| \geq .25$) and in which there was a difference in significance level between males' and females' coefficients will be discussed.

Several gender differences surfaced in the relationship between apologizing before forgiveness was offered and the impact of forgiveness. Apologizing was related to impact of forgiveness on quality of relationship and view of the injured party for males only: males who apologized reported more impact of forgiveness on quality of relationship and

their view of the offended person. Time since the offense was positively related to impact of forgiveness on view of self as offender for women and on view of the injured party for men. Perceptions of the quality of forgiveness offered was related to view of self as offender for women only. For males, participants' estimate of the closeness of the relationship before the offense occurred was positively related to the impact of forgiveness on view of the offended party. Pre-offense importance of relationship was positively related to the forgiveness' effects on quality of relationship for men and negatively related to the impact of forgiveness on view of self as offender for women. Finally, for males, self-esteem was positively related to how much forgiveness affected one's view of the injured party.

Discussion

Instruments

All scales had adequate reliability for research purposes. Although all receiving forgiveness factors involve morality to some degree, one factor (4) involved what we might call obvious moral change. The average rating for the four items on this positive moral change factor was 4.02 (out of 5), suggesting that participants agreed that receiving forgiveness led to experiences such as positive change in personality and values, making the decision to be a more moral person, and planning to be more forgiving in the future.

The other three factors, although not involving such obvious moral changes, involve morality to some degree. Factor 1, focusing on the impact of forgiveness on relationship quality, involves relational elements such as re-establishment of trust, better communication, and reconciliation. Morality is learned and practiced in the context of human relationships, so to the extent that receiving forgiveness can increase the quality of the bond between individuals, it effects positive moral change directly and/or provides an environment where moral development can take place. The average rating of Factor 1 items was 4.08, suggesting that participants agreed that relational benefits accrued from the forgiveness experience.

The lowest item average was found for the items loading on Factor 2 ($\bar{x} = 3.57$). It appears that participants were somewhat more neutral about the effect of forgiveness on their view of self as offender. Several of the items on this scale have a moral quality to them (e.g., I feel unable to make restitution, I think badly about myself). It may be that receiving forgiveness takes longer to alter one's sense of self as offender than it does to impact other areas. Or, it may be that one's perspective on self as offender is strongly conditioned by other variables (e.g., importance of the

relationship, sensitivity of conscience, tendency toward guilt) that forgiveness interacts with in order to effect change. Alternatively, the self-forgiveness process may take place relatively independently of the receiving forgiveness process.

Factor 3 items had the highest level of endorsement, averaging 4.49 out of 5. Most participants either agreed or strongly agreed that receiving forgiveness positively impacted their view of the injured party. Many of these items involve moral issues, such as respecting the other and desiring not to hurt him/her again. It may be that the strong impact of forgiveness on one's view of the offended party somehow mediates the impact on relationship quality. Note in Table 4 that the two highest correlations between factors are between Factors 1 and 3, suggesting that those who believed forgiveness positively impacted their perceptions of the injured party also believed it positively impacted the quality of their relationship with that person. Not surprisingly, perceptions of the quality of forgiveness offered were also strongly and positively related to these two factors (Table 6). While several causal pathways might be proposed, a logical one is that high quality forgiveness offered contributes both to improved view of the forgiver and the quality of the relationship. We might logically argue that an improved view of the injured party precedes and even contributes to an improved relationship. Both theory (Enright et al., 1996) and empirical work (Gassin, 1996) support the notion that reconciliation, an important sign of an increase in the quality of relationship between offender and offended, is a later development in the forgiveness process (if it happens at all).

Allowing forgiveness to improve one's view of the injured party may also contribute to positive moral change, as evidenced by the moderately strong relationship between Factor 3 and 4 (Table 4). The injured party who models forgiveness not only gains respect from the offender, but may serve as a compelling model for the offender to follow.

Correlations

In general, correlations between receiving forgiveness outcomes and demographic variables were weak and non-significant (Table 5). The weak but suggestive correlations between gender and impact of forgiveness will be further explored below. Perhaps the most interesting correlation between forgiveness outcomes and relationship variables involve the perceived quality of forgiveness offered, the nature of the relationship before the offense, and the degree of pain caused (Table 6). Perceived quality of forgiveness given was strongly related to the reported impact of that forgiveness on the quality of the relationship, on the view of the injured party, and to the total forgiveness score. This suggests that offering forgiveness in a manner that is loving and uncoercive is important if one wants to induce positive change in the offender and the relationship. Drawing on clinical experience, Coleman (1989) elaborates on

how "low-quality" forgiveness may affect the offender. Coleman focuses on the motive for forgiving and states that if forgiveness is offered out of fear, desperation, a desire to control, or a need to bolster one's self-esteem, the person receiving forgiveness may experience any number of negative outcomes (e.g., loss of respect for forgiver, feeling smothered by the forgiver, etc.). Given the results in this study that demonstrate a strong, positive relationship between quality of forgiveness offered and impact of forgiveness on offender, it seems that the opposite may also be true: forgiveness offered in love and strength is linked to and may directly cause positive change in the offender.

Other correlational analyses found that the quality of the relationship before the offense (operationalized as closeness in and importance of relationship) was negatively related to view of self as offender, suggesting that those who had high quality relationships with the injured party before the offense are more prone to brood over the offense and condemn themselves for it. (We might call this a lack of self-forgiveness.) Importance of pre-offense relationship, however, was positive related to impact of forgiveness on the quality of current relationship, positive moral change, and especially the offender's view of the forgiver. This suggests that forgiveness in important relationships has more power to effect moral and relational change that in those relationships that are not as significant. This finding parallels those of Subkoviak et al. (1992), who found that offering forgiveness is more closely related to mental health when the offense occurs in the context of a developmentally-appropriate relationship (e.g., romantic relationship in young adulthood) than in a relationship that is not as important to a person (e.g., employer-employee relationship). Finally, indices of degree of pain caused were negatively related to the effect of forgiveness on view of self as offender, demonstrating that those who caused the other more pain were less likely to allow forgiveness to positively affect their sense of self as offender.

Self-esteem, contrary to predictions based on Fisher et al.'s (1982) work on being the target of prosocial behavior, was only weakly connected to the impact of forgiveness. This result, however, varied by gender (Table 8). Men's self-esteem was positively connected to the effect of forgiveness on their view of the injured party and overall effect of forgiveness, whereas no correlations were found for women. While Fisher et al. conclude that high self-esteem may actually interfere with accepting assistance from others, it seems to facilitate men's acceptance of forgiveness, especially in terms of allowing the forgiveness to improve their perceptions of the person offering it. Perhaps men, adopting traditional sex roles, see themselves as the leaders in relationships. (This may be particularly true in the current sample, as most are students at a relatively conservative church-affiliated liberal arts college.) Possibly, only those men with higher self-esteem are able to receive forgiveness without feeling threatened. Given the argument made above that

an improvement in the offender's view of the injured party may be a foundation of an improvement in the quality of relationship and positive moral change, it may be that males with high levels of self-esteem are poised to make more moral and relational gains as a result of receiving forgiveness than those with low self-esteem.

Other gender differences in correlational patterns are of note. Men who apologized reported greater positive impact of forgiveness than those who did not, a relationship that was not found among women. There were no gender differences in rate of apologizing ($\chi 2 = .67$, $p > .10$), ruling out the possibility that this result simply reflects a conflagration of gender and tendency to apologize. Because apologizing was not related to reported quality of forgiveness offered for either gender ($r = -.08$, $p = .35$ for women, $r = -.11$, $p = .40$ for men), this difference cannot be explained by apology-related differences in the experience of forgiveness received. It may be that the impact of apologizing on the quality of forgiveness offered is more subtle than could be detected with an 11-item survey assessing an offender's perceptions of the kind of forgiveness given. If apologizing positively affects the quality of forgiveness offered (as logic would suggest), an individual -- due to gender stereotypes -- may not expect men to apologize, and when they do, the forgiveness offered may be in some subtle sense more complete than if the offender(s) did not apologize. Because women traditionally are expected to sacrifice themselves for the sake of relationships, a woman's apology may not have as predictable or as deep an influence on the quality of forgiveness offered. If this is true, women who have hurt another person may feel inefficacious to affect the reactions of their target. This may be problematic for women's self-forgiveness, as their perceptions of the quality of forgiveness given is related to the impact of forgiveness on their sense of self as offender.

Gender differences also surfaced in the relationship between time since the hurtful situation and the impact of forgiveness. Time since injury was positively related to impact of forgiveness on sense of self as offender for women only, suggesting that women take a longer amount of time to allow forgiveness to play a role in their own self-forgiveness. Time since injury was positively related to impact of forgiveness on view of injured party for men only, meaning that men may initially guard against allowing receiving forgiveness to improve their perceptions of the forgiver. This effect may be moderated by the quality of the pre-offense relationship, which is positively associated with forgiveness' impact on the offender's view of the injured party for men only. In general, men may take longer than women in realizing that a person who offers forgiveness is worthy of respect, but when forgiveness is offered in a close, important relationship, that lag may be tempered. Interestingly, whereas quality of relationship may foster a greater

positive impact of forgiveness on males' perceptions of the forgiver, it may hinder females' ability to allow forgiveness to affect positively their perceptions of self as offender. Women who hurt an important other may engage in self-condemnation to such a degree that even receiving forgiveness for the offense does little to ameliorate their self-censure, at least initially.

Overall, these gender-related results suggest men and women have somewhat different patterns in responding to forgiveness offered. Perhaps due to greater internalization of problems and a traditional sense of greater responsibility for a relationship, women seem to take longer to allow forgiveness to positively affect their sense of self; this may be particularly true when the offense occurs in a close relationship. Men, on the other hand, seem more reluctant to allow forgiveness to positively affect their opinion of the forgiver. Some (e.g., Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988) report that men are more likely to use a justice strategy in solving moral dilemmas. If this is true, men may feel ambivalent about receiving forgiveness: on the one hand, it provides a foundation for restoring a relationship, while on the other hand, forgiveness circumvents a retributive justice response by the injured party. Initially, this ambivalence may be reflected in the male offender's view of the forgiver.

Educational Applications

The experience of receiving forgiveness is laden with moral lessons. Teachers and administrators can make use of this concept as they review stories in the humanities or social sciences that involve forgiveness themes, and as they encounter forgiveness situations in the daily routine of the classroom. Probably the most important guiding principle in dealing with historical, literary, or real-life forgiveness situations is to strive to help students consciously think through information about the context, process, and result of offering and receiving forgiveness. School staff may want to have a series of questions ready to adapt to specific forgiveness situations that arise, including:

1. Why did the behavior of X hurt Y?
2. How did X's apology (or lack thereof) affect Y's response?
3. Did Y convey his/her forgiveness to X, and if so, how? What were Y's motives in offering forgiveness?
4. What lessons can X learn from Y's forgiveness? How do you expect forgiveness to affect X's relationship with and perceptions of Y, X's self-perceptions, and X's personality and values?

5. How has culture and/or gender affected the way both X and Y act in this situation and what they learn from the situation?

These questions are particularly relevant after the objective details of the offense have been established and both sides have had a chance to make their perspectives known.

Conclusion

In sum, moral lessons are part of the outcome of receiving forgiveness from another. Factor analysis of a measure assessing how receiving forgiveness impacts a person revealed one factor that represented internal moral change and several other factors that involved morality to some degree. The offender's perception of the quality of the forgiveness offered is closely connected to the efficacy of the forgiveness in the life of the offender. There may be some gender differences in how men and women allow forgiveness to affect them. However, because this research was conducted in a relatively conservative environment (a church-affiliated liberal arts college), these gender differences -- and indeed, all the results -- should be replicated with a more heterogeneous sample.

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Table 1

Descriptive statistics for continuous variables (including Likert Scale responses)

Variable	Mean	SD	Theoretical Min	Theoretical Max	N
Age	20.11	3.72	-	-	202
Months since offense	27.52	32.91	-	-	197
Social desirability scale	48.36	4.20	33	66	200
Self-esteem scale	42.16	4.51	25	50	194
Emotional pain caused	3.32	.69	1	4	202
Physical pain caused	1.15	.48	1	4	202
Practical problems caused	1.18	.58	1	4	202
Total pain caused (sum of previous 3)	5.65	1.02	3	12	202
Closeness of relationship before offense	3.00	.92	1	4	202
Importance of relationship before offense	3.07	.94	1	4	202
Factor 1 (relationship improved) (total)	36.69	7.46	9	45	201
Factor 1 (relationship improved) (item avg.)	4.08	.83	1	5	201
Factor 2 (view of self) (total)	24.97	6.11	7	35	201
Factor 2 (view of self) (item avg)	3.57	.87	1	5	201
Factor 3 (view of injured party) (total)	26.91	3.80	6	30	201
Factor 3 (view of injured party) (item avg.)	4.49	.63	1	5	201
Factor 4 (positive moral change) (total)	16.09	3.14	4	20	201
Factor 4 (positive moral change) (item avg)	4.02	.78	1	5	201
Effects of forgiveness total	104.66	14.26	26	130	201
Reported quality of forgiveness offered	45.72	6.74	11	55	201

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for nominal variables

Variable		Frequency	Percent
Sex:	female	135	66.8
	male	67	33.2
Ethnicity:	African-American	7	3.5
	Asian-American	3	1.5
	Caucasian	184	91.1
	Hispanic	5	2.5
	Native American	3	1.5
Marital Status:	Never Married	188	93.0
	First Marriage	9	4.5
	Divorced/remarried	2	1.0
	Divorced/single	3	1.5
Relationship of Injured Party:			
	Spouse	2	1.0
	Friend	68	33.7
	Child	1	.5
	Parent	40	19.8
	Dating Partner	62	30.7
	Sibling	25	12.4
	Other relative	3	1.5
	Other	1	5
Apologized before forgiveness offered:			
	Yes	155	77.1
	No	46	22.9
Religious Affiliation:	Christian	178	88.6
	None	23	11.4

Table 3

Results of factor analysis of receiving forgiveness scale

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
8. We have been driven further apart	-.679			
11. I am joyful	.479			
15. We have taken steps to reconciliation	.679			
19. Our relationship getting worse	-.698			
21. We are communicating better	.701			
29. I am hopeful re relationship improvement	.590		(.395)	
30. Trust is being re-established	.706			
33. We are able to how affection more freely	.656			
34. We have lost commitment to relationship	-.774			
2. I am no longer upset about the incident		.578		
3. I think badly of myself		-.559		
12. I feel guilty		-.779		
13. I am angry at myself		-.765		
14. I no longer dwell on how I hurt them		.617		
28. I no longer condemn myself for offense		.609		
35. I feel unable to make restitution for offense		-.441		
7. They have earned my respect	(.395)		.414	
10. I believe they are trying to manipulate me			-.680	
16. I have a desire not to hurt them again			.602	
23. I am angry at them			-.706	
27. I have decided forgiveness is a bad idea			-.693	
31. I consider them to be weak			-.494	
17. I see a positive change in my personality				.747
22. I see a positive change in my values				.789
26. I've decided to try to be better morally				.745
32. I plan to be more forgiving in future				.547
TOTAL VARIANCE EXPLAINED	24.7%	11.5%	7.0%	5.8%
RELIABILITY OF FACTOR SUBSCALE	.87	.76	.74	.78

Table 4

Correlations between factor subscales and total forgiveness score

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Total	.87***	.60***	.68***	.48***
Factor 1		.29***	.54***	.33***
Factor 2			.10	-.05
Factor 3				.41***

Note. Factor 1 = quality of relationship with injured party; Factor 2 = view of self as offender; Factor 3 = view of injured party; Factor 4 = positive moral change; Total = sum of factor subscale scores.

*p < .10 ** p < .05 ***p < .01

Table 5

Correlations between receiving forgiveness scales and demographic variables

	Factor Subscales & Total Forgiveness Score				
	1	2	3	4	Total
Age	-.01	.04	.08	-.17**	.00
Sex	-.12*	.00	-.12*	-.09	-.12*
Religion	-.08	-.01	-.04	.05	-.05

Note. Factor 1 = quality of relationship with injured party; Factor 2 = view of self as offender; Factor 3 = view of injured party; Factor 4 = positive moral change; Total = sum of factor subscale scores. Sex coded as females = 1, males = 2. Religion coded as Christian = 1, no affiliation = 2.

*p < .10 ** p < .05 ***p < .01

Table 6

Correlations between receiving forgiveness scales and relationship variables

	Factor Subscales and Total Forgiveness Score				
	1	2	3	4	Total
Apologize	-.16**	.03	-.18**	.00	-.12*
Months	.11	.21***	.18**	.11	.22***
Forgive offered	.75***	.25***	.55***	.25***	.70***
Close	.04	-.23***	.14*	.10	-.02
Important	.18**	-.23***	.27***	.15**	.10
Emot Pain	-.07	-.23***	.09	.17**	-.07
Phys Pain	-.01	.11	.03	.00	.05
Practical Prob	-.08	-.22***	-.09	-.10	-.18**
Total Pain	-.09	-.23***	.02	.06	-.13

Note. Factor 1 = quality of relationship with injured party; Factor 2 = view of self as offender; Factor 3 = view of injured party; Factor 4 = positive moral change; Total = sum of factor subscale scores. Apologized before forgiveness offered coded as yes = 1, no = 2. Months = months passed since offense; forgive offered = perception of quality of forgiveness offered; close = degree of closeness before offense; important = how important relationship was before offense; emot pain = estimate of emotional pain caused; phys pain = estimate of physical pain caused; practical prob = estimate of practical problems caused; total pain = sum of 3 previous pain indexes.

*p < .10 ** p < .05 ***p < .01

Table 7

Gender comparisons on forgiveness outcome variables

Variable		Mean	SD	t	p
Forgiveness Total	F	105.86	13.71	1.71	088
	M	102.20	15.21		
Factor 1	F	37.33	7.31	1.75	082
	M	35.38	7.66		
Factor 2	F	25.00	6.20	0.10	921
	M	24.91	5.96		
Factor 3	F	27.23	3.48	1.59	116
	M	26.26	4.35		
Factor 4	F	16.30	2.91	1.39	167
	M	15.65	3.55		

Note. F = female, M = male; all analyses include 135 females and 66 males. $df = 199$ in each t-test, except that of Factor 3, which was conducted with $df = 106.88$ due to unequal variances.

Table 8

Gender differences in correlations between forgiveness subscales and other variables (females in first row, males in second row)

	Factor Subscale and Total Forgiveness Score				
	1	2	3	4	Total
Age	.01	.11	.11	-.16*	.05
	-.02	-.13	.06	-.19	-.08
Apologize	-.12	-.03	-.08	.04	-.09
	-.25**	.15	-.39***	-.09	-.19
Months	.11	.25***	.13	.13	.24***
	.12	.11	.29**	.10	.21*
Forgive offered	.77***	.27***	.57***	.21**	.72***
	.74***	.19	.52**	.33***	.68***
Close	-.06	-.24***	.06	.15*	-.09
	.23*	-.20	.27**	-.02	.11
Important	.11	-.27***	.21**	.15*	.03
	.27**	-.17	.35**	.12	.19
Emot Pain	-.14	-.19**	.03	.16*	-.12
	.06	-.29**	.17	.17	.01
Practical Prob	-.12	-.23***	-.03	-.17**	-.21**
	.02	-.20	-.19	.02	-.12
Total Pain	-.17**	-.21**	.03	-.01	-.18**
	.06	-.27**	.00	.15	-.04
Self-esteem	.03	.12	.02	.04	.08
	.14	.17	.26**	.10	.24*

Note. Factor 1 = quality of relationship with injured party, Factor 2 = view of self as offender, Factor 3 = view of injured party, Factor 4 = positive moral change, Total = sum of factor subscale scores. Apologized before forgiveness offered coded as yes = 1, no = 2. Months = months passed since offense, forgive offered = perception of quality of forgiveness offered, close = degree of closeness before offense, important = how important relationship was before offense, emot pain = estimate of emotional pain caused, phys pain = estimate of physical pain caused, practical prob = estimate of practical problems caused, total pain = sum of emotional pain, physical pain, and practical problems caused indexes. Religious affiliation and physical pain caused are not included in this table because there were no significant correlations for either gender.

*$p < .10$ **$p < .05$ ***$p < .01$

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